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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

THURSDAY, January 18, 1934.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

SUBJECT: "Johnny on the Spot." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Sometimes I think that the worst trials and tribulations we women have are the small ones. Troubles don't necessarily come in large doses. Little petty annoyances often cause quite as much grief--for example, little annoyances like spots and stains. Did you ever consider how much trouble they cause in this world? Well, taken by and large, down through the years, little spots here and little stains there have probably caused housekeepers as much worry and fret, trouble, expense, and even tears as--well, actually, as floods and famine.

A friend of mine told me the other day that one of her earliest and saddest memories was of her first party frock--fluffy pink with a sash. She said she has always looked back on it as the prettiest dress ever made.

"And you have no idea how proud I was when I put that dress on for the first--and last--time, Aunt Sammy, but my pride soon had a sad fall. The little boy sitting next to me at the party upset his ice cream and it fell my way. The bad stain it made ended the glory of my pink dress then and there. My mother thought the stain would come out in the wash. But it didn't."

Well, and speaking of trouble from spots and stains, let me tell you another true story. This is the story of my neighbor's rug. Mrs. Jackson, who used to live next door, scrimped and saved for ten years to buy a new living room rug. And she hadn't had it for ten days before somebody spilled ink on it. Poor Mrs. Jackson came home and frantically tried sour milk and every other remedy the neighbors suggested. But she only made the spot worse.

I don't need to go on telling you about the tragedies that can result from such little things as spots and stains. Almost all of us have had similar experiences. And our grandmothers and great-grandmothers had them before us. Grease spots, ink spots, fruit stains, medicine stains and so on--these have so often meant bad news for clothes, rugs, linens and other household fabrics. Little accidental splatters of this and drops of that have cut in on the family pocket-book during the years and caused a lot of waste as well as unhappiness.

But before you think our conversation is becoming too gloomy, let me mention that some stories that have sad beginnings have happy endings. That's even true for spot and stain stories nowadays. Some years ago home economists began to make a serious study of removing stains at home. And now they have helpful information that was lacking back in the days of my friend's pink dress and my neighbor's living room rug. Today you don't have to deal with stains hit-and-miss. You can get yourself one of these leaflets giving details on treating stains

scientifically. In case you don't already know it, I'd like to mention that the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D.C. has a leaflet on spot and stain removal.

Of course, the specialists don't promise that all stains will come out successfully, even with the best methods. Sometimes you just can't remove a stain without also removing the color from the fabric. But once you know the whys and hows of treating most common spots, you'll be able to prevent many disasters. Different kinds of stains need different treatment. And certain very simple tricks in handling stained material make all the difference between a spot that's set for life and one that comes out successfully.

The specialists tell me that prompt action is important point number one in successful stain removal. It's a case of being Johnny on the spot, if you want the spot to depart in peace. If possible get after the spot before it dries and settles and grows stubborn. This means that you'll need the right stain-removal equipment at hand. No time after the shoe polish has tipped over on the sofa to run up to the drug store and ask the man behind the counter what to buy to take out the stain. You'll save money, time and damage by fixing up a little stain removal kit containing such useful articles as a bottle of good grease solvent, bleaching liquid, ammonia, clean absorbent cloth, white blotting paper, bowls, brushes and an eye dropper. Of course, you can add to that list any other items that you find useful for the job. Once set for emergencies this way, you don't need to despair when Junior calls, "Oh, Mummy, I've poured paint all over my new suit," or even when Uncle Charlie sits down in the fly paper. You'll just step right up to your stain removal outfit, have a look at the directions for taking out that certain kind of stain, get out your equipment, and remove the spot before anyone can say Jack Robinson.

So there's the first rule--prompt treatment and the right treatment of the stain. With directions at hand to refer to, with the right equipment for the job, you can be your own doctor.

Of course, you know that for safety you should look after all stains before they go into the regular wash. Soap sets a lot of stains. And then you're in for extra trouble. For example, soap sets stains from tea and coffee and fruit. The way to treat these stains is to pour boiling water directly on them from a few feet above. And pour it on while they're new and fresh. The heat as well as the force of the water helps to remove the stain.

Every now and then some friend tells me that she never tries to take out stains anymore because she usually just makes a big smudge that looks worse than the original spot. And other people even have said that they never have luck taking out simple grease spots. They usually find a ring left around the spot that makes the place even more conspicuous. These complaints bring us to rule number two about taking out stains. Rule number two is: Use very, very little of any liquid stain remover. Small doses are always the safest remedies for stains. Apply very little but apply it over and over if necessary. Just dampen your cloth with the liquid. Never wet it. Be patient. Apply the stuff with quick light motions and keep at it until all the moisture is dry. Then do it again--and again--if the spot needs it. Don't spoil matters at the very start by getting the fabric sopping wet and making a bad ring. And be sure to use absorbent cloth or white blotting paper under the fabric as you work.

Well, so much about stains today. There's much more to the story but I'll have to save it for some other time.

Tomorrow we'll talk about platter meals--good-looking, time-saving, dish-saving combinations.

